

REMARKS

Claims 1-17 are pending in the application. The Examiner has rejected Claims 1, 3-7 and 9-11 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Belaiche (U.S. Patent 6,501,748) in view of Tong et al. (U.S. Publication 2004/0146029). The Examiner has rejected Claims 2 and 8 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Belaiche in view of Andersen et al. (U.S. Patent 5,674,003). The Examiner has rejected Claims 12-17 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Belaiche in view of Tong et al, and further in view of Davis et al. (U.S. Patent 6,781,971).

Please cancel Claims 1-6 and 13, without prejudice. Please amend Claims 7, 12, 14 and 16 as set forth herein. No new matter has been added.

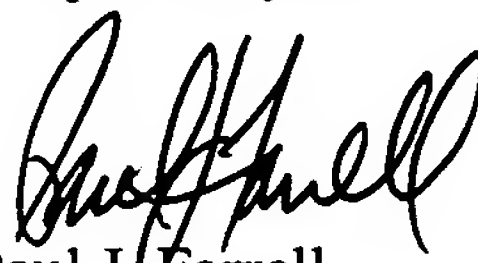
In March 2006 a telephonic interview was conducted between the Examiner and the Applicants' representative, Paul J. Farrell, during which the Examiner proposed the claim amendments contained herein. These claim amendments were then submitted on May 4, 2006 and again on July 24, 2006 to the Examiner in proposed form. It is gratefully acknowledged that the Examiner stated that the proposed amendments would place the application in condition for allowance.

The amendments contained herein are the same amendments submitted in the proposal. Based on at least the foregoing, it is therefore respectfully requested that the rejections of Claims 7-12 and 14-17 be withdrawn, and a Notice of Allowance be issued.

Independent Claims 7 and 12 are believed to be in condition for allowance. Without conceding the patentability per se of dependent Claims 8-11 and 14-17, these are likewise believed to be allowable by virtue of their dependence on their respective amended independent claims. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of dependent Claims 8-11 and 14-17 is respectfully requested.

Accordingly, all of the claims pending in the Application, namely, Claims 7-12 and 14-17, are believed to be in condition for allowance. It is respectfully requested that the Examiner contact Applicants' attorney at the number given below to facilitate resolution of any remaining matters.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul J. Farrell", written in a cursive style.

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